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Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

June 2024

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, June 20, 2024, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The guest speaker will be Carrie Cuevas who will speak on the history of Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, MS. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call by noon on Wednesday, July 19**, to make your reservation. Seating is limited to forty-eight (48) people, and we need to order the correct number of lunches. **Served at noon, lunch is \$15.00 for members and \$17.00 for nonmembers**, payable at the door. The catering order is submitted on Wednesday at noon prior to the luncheon on Thursday. If you need to cancel your reservation, please call by noon on Wednesday prior to the luncheon if at all possible so that the society does not incur unnecessary expenses. It is catered by Almost Home Catering with Chef Michelle Nichols. The lunch menu for June is whiskey glazed pork loin, garlic mashed potatoes, carrots, yeast rolls, and banana bread cobbler.



This ship was built at Ingalls Shipbuilding, a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, in Pascagoula, Mississippi.



Colonel Allan "Al" Sarrat was a USAF pilot in the Vietnam War. Al flew a KC-135 Stratotanker refueling B-52 Bombers and F-4 Fighter Jets over the Gulf of Tonkin.

VIETNAM III

By

James Keating M.D.

This article is the third account reporting on the experiences of Hancock County veterans of the Vietnam War. The first veteran is Al Sarrat, who served in the US Air Force. The second veteran is Clyde Koerner, Jr, who served in the US Marine Corps. These anecdotes of Hancock County patriots demonstrate the complex character of modern war-

fare that necessitates occasionally marshaling military assets to wage war on land, sea, and air. It will become evident to the reader that the United States of America is the only nation in the world that can project power, if necessary, to any region of the globe. Since World War II America has maintained the freedom of the seas worldwide and created what is called the American Order which has fostered a robust world economy.

Al J. Sarrat

Allan J. Sarrat, Jr. (Al) was born in New Orleans, LA, in 1948. His father Allan Sr. (1924-2002),

THE
HISTORIAN
OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
James Keating, Publisher

Published monthly by the
**HANCOCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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MISSION STATEMENT

“TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION.”

relocated the family to Bay St. Louis, MS, in 1962. His father was a sales manager, and his mother, Marilyn LeBoeuf Sarrat (1925-2010), was a homemaker. Al attended St. Stanislaus High School where he was a class officer for four years and a member of the student council. He graduated in 1966 and then attended the University of Southern Mississippi graduating in 1970. He met his future wife, Margaret MacDowell, on a double date in high school, and they started dating after Al graduated. Margaret was a member of the last graduating class of St. Joseph Academy in 1967. Her father, Ernest (Mac) MacDowell (1924-2010), was a salesman, and her mother, Denise De Jean MacDowell, was a registered nurse at Hancock General Hospital. Margaret and Al were married at Our Lady of the Gulf Church in Bay St. Louis on August



Al and Margaret's wedding in Bay St. Louis, the day before Hurricane Camille

16, 1969, the day before Hurricane Camille devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast. After a one-night honeymoon to New Orleans and anticipating the storm, they returned and spent the first ten days of married life in Bay St. Louis with no elec-

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Memorial Day weekend this year was a time to remember. Our county and cities were overflowing with family, friends, and weekend visitors. While much has changed, much remains the same. In the late 19th and early 20th century Bay Saint Louis had as many as twelve hotels. Some of the more popular were the Crescent, later called the Pickwick, the Bay Saint Louis, and the Clifton. After 1900 came Liberty, the Klock, and the Weston, which became the Reed Hotel. By the mid-1900s the Reed was the only survivor and later became a nursing home until Katrina got the best of this last of its kind. The other hotels burned, were destroyed by hurricanes, or became a victim of newer developments.

Our beach front hotels are now the Pearl and Baytown Inn with many visitors now staying at any of the hundreds of vacation rentals in our community. Rather than dining and dancing at the grand old hotels, now locals and visitors crowd our numerous dining and entertainment venues not only on holiday weekends but every weekend and almost every day of the week.

History repeats itself often with a twist.

Under the Research tab on our website, you will find a vast collection of historical information about our community.

“For every complex problem, there's a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong.” H.L. Mencken

Chris Roth
President



In the photo above Lt. Al Sarrat is about to fly the T-37 Trainer Jet during pilot

tricity or running water but fresh tetanus shots. The young couple then spent Al's senior year in Hattiesburg at USM.

Shortly before graduation Al realized he was a prime candidate for the draft and needed to make plans for the military. He had previously taken the Air Force Officer Qualification test and was eligible to apply for pilot training. He was accepted and left for officer training in January 1971. Margaret stayed behind in Bay St. Louis, and their first child, a daughter, Stacy, was born the next month while Al was in San Antonio. Upon OTS graduation in April 1971, he left for Pilot Training at Laredo AFB, TX. At pilot training, Al flew the Cessna T-41, the T-37 primary jet trainer, and the supersonic T-38. After pilot training, he attended several survival schools followed by KC-135 qualification training and was as-



The family of Al and Margaret Sarrat

signed to fly the KC-135 Stratotanker, a variation of the Boeing 707 modified for air refueling. This aircraft requires a 4-person crew: aircraft commander, co-pilot, navigator, and boom operator. The boom operator was the one enlisted person on the crew.

The young family arrived at Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota, in September of 1972, and before finding housing, Al was promptly told he would soon be leaving for a deployment to Kadena AB, Okinawa, where he would be supporting the war effort. Margaret returned to Bay St. Louis and stayed with family during the deployment. Al participated in aerial refueling of numerous aircraft including fighters, reconnaissance, cargo/transport aircraft, and bombers.

A typical mission could deploy any time of the day or night and would generally range from four to eight hours. When moving aircraft across the Pacific, longer missions were required. In addition to air refueling, the KC 135 was also used for the movement of personnel and cargo throughout the theater. On one mission, Al's crew was tasked to move time sensitive SR-71 reconnaissance data from Okinawa to Alaska. Upon landing in Alaska another KC-135 was waiting with engines running to complete moving the data to the Pentagon and then to the White House where the President would review it.

Al Sarrat retired from the Air Force after twenty-eight years of service as Full-Bird Colonel.

Clyde Cyrial Koerner

Clyde Cyrial Koerner, Jr., was born in 1950 at the Hotel Dieu Hospital in New Orleans. He attended the Denim Springs High School in Louisiana and in 1968 enlisted in the US Marines during the Vietnam War. His father is Clyde Cyrial Koerner Sr., (b. 1925)

and his mother was Patsy Treadway (1928-2003). The Koerners are an old Bay St. Louis family that dates back to a great-grandfather, Henry Koerner, who as a cabin boy jumped ship in the middle of the Nineteenth Century because his captain stuck him in his back with a table fork because the young boy brought him cold food. Henry prospered in America and acquired eighty acres of land in Cedar Point in 1862. Henry spawned seven generations of descendants in the Bay.

Richard Nixon was elected President of the USA in 1968, and he immediately initiated a strategy of "Vietnamization" of the war. This period of the war was considered a "wound down segment" of US commitment, accompanied by an expanded role of the South Vietnam forces (ARVN). Nevertheless, in 1970, US Marine Corporal Clyde Koerner, Jr., was inserted in the First Marine Division line in the northern province of South Vietnam, Quang Nam, below the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in the mountains west of Danang near Laos. The marines were actively engaged in daily "up close and personal" combat. Clyde was in a "free-fire" zone, and he volunteered to be point man for all his patrols in this "no man's land." His extensive experience as a hunter of deer and other game in Hancock County was instrumental in his ability to function in this Asian jungle.

Clyde remembers that this area of Vietnam was hot and wet every day. Clouds hung over the valleys and some 120 inches of rain drenched the landscape especially during the monsoon season. The ground cover seemed to be either all-but-impenetrable strands of bamboo or sawtooth elephant grass. The soldiers walked along animal trails booby-trapped with land mines and leech-filled streams and ponds. The



The Koerner Family is noted in this photo taken at the recent ninety-ninth birthday party of Clyde Koerner Senior. The Vietnam Marine Corps Veteran, Clyde Koerner, Jr., is standing to the readers left. Clyde III, and Clyde IV are on the right side.

US Army warned the soldiers that “over 97% of the snakes in the jungle are deadly poisonous, and the other 3% there will eat you alive!”

Clyde’s patrol went out only at night. He reports that there were three types of patrols in this vast mountain jungle. The first was pure reconnaissance whereby Clyde infiltrated the jungle at night with only a radioman teammate accompanying him. When he found the location of enemy soldiers, he would determine the coordinates of their position, and the radioman would call in artillery fire from a Navy destroyer or an F-4 Fighter jet. A second type of patrol was called a “Killer Team” that would infiltrate with a Huey helicopter they nicknamed *Spooky* that would follow them undetected. Clyde had a small strobe light strapped to his helmet which pointed upward toward *Spooky* so this stealthy gunship following him did not shoot him and his patrol, but only the enemy in front of them that was seen the night before on the first reconnaissance patrol. When they encountered the enemy, *Spooky* would participate in the gunfight, usually to the marine’s great advantage. Finally, the third type of patrol was a formal “search and destroy” mission with six marines and *Spooky*. Clyde was point man and squadron leader for all three types of patrols

in these mountains.

On these patrols he gathered intelligence from inspection of enemy dead as to where and how many enemy combatants were encountered. And also, he determined the quality of their firearms and other gear and food. Clyde had attended a “Land Mine War School.” The majority of casualties for marines in this type of jungle warfare were actually from land mines. It was like chasing ghosts. Accordingly, this area of Vietnam was called “Leatherneck Square.” However, Marines called the DMZ the “Dead Marine Zone” or “the Graveyard.” Clyde Koerner was decorated with the usual ribbons for Vietnam War combat service as well as the RNV Cross of Gallantry with palm and frame.

After the deployment to Vietnam, Clyde was in the Inactive Reserves. In 1971, he married Mary Elizabeth “Sandy” Green. They have been married fifty-three years. Clyde ran heavy building equipment for Saucier Construction and Crown Equipment and retired in 2012. The Koerners celebrated St. Joseph’s Day for fifty years with a feast that was well-attended by the neighborhood community. Sandy’s mother was Nina Christine Strickland (1909-2008), who was a professional singer in New York City, a nurse, a florist (Nina’s House of Flowers), and a newspaper columnist (*Lakeshore*

Log). Her father was Malcolm Green (1916-1971) who was a wood cutter and trapper.

In conclusion, an excellent source of information about this subject is the film, *The Vietnam War*, produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick and written by Geoffrey C. Ward. A book *The Vietnam War*, accompanies this film. Geoffrey Ward reports in this film that “America’s involvement in Vietnam began in secrecy, and it ended thirty years later in failure witnessed by the entire world. It was begun in good faith by decent people, out of fateful misunderstanding, American overconfidence, and cold war miscalculation. And it was prolonged because it seemed easier to muddle through than admit that it had been caused by tragic decisions made by five American Presidents belonging to both political parties. For many Vietnamese it was a brutal civil war, for others the bloody climatic chapter in a century-old struggle for independence.”

SOURCES

- Koerner, Clyde Cyrial, Jr. Personal interview, April 11, 2024.
 Sarrat, Allan J. Sarrat, Jr. Personal interview, April 22, 2024.
 Ward, Geoffrey C. *The Vietnam War: An Intimate History*. New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2017.



Mississippi Gulf Coast Historical and Cultural Exposition

The Annual Mississippi Gulf Coast Historical and Cultural Exposition was presented on Friday and Saturday, May 3 and 4, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day at the Biloxi Visitor's Center. Several historical societies and other organizations from along the coast attended and shared information about their societies.



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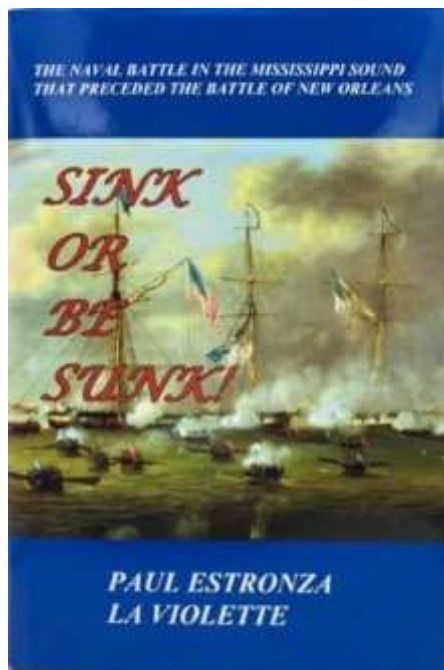
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The Battle of Bay St. Louis

Did you know that the Bay of St. Louis and neighboring Lake Borgne played strategic roles in the War of 1812? The Historical Society will present a play in September depicting the days in mid-December, 1814, when the British fleet entered our Mississippi waters. In connection with this, the Society now has copies of *Sink or Be Sunk* by member Paul La Violette, a detailed, well-researched account of these events. This hardcover, signed book sells for \$30.00 and is available at the Lobrano House or online at our website.

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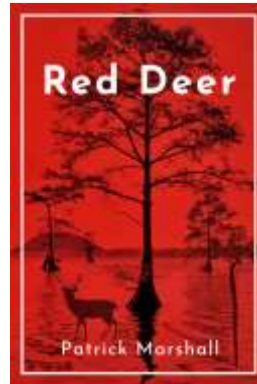
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